

Walnut Creek Watershed Council

Achievement Report 2015

Caring for Our Creeks



© Stephen Joseph Photography 2015



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Cover Photo Courtesy of Photographer Stephen Joseph

Walnut Creek Watershed Council

City and Town Supporters:

City of Concord
City of Lafayette
City of Martinez
City of Orinda
City of Pleasant Hill
City of San Ramon
City of Walnut Creek
Town of Danville
Town of Moraga

Government Agency Supporters:

Central Contra Costa Sanitary District
Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority
Contra Costa County
CCC Flood Control and Water Conservation District
Contra Costa Resource Conservation District
East Bay Municipal Utility District
East Bay Regional Park District

Non-profit Agency Supporters:

Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen
Friends of the Creeks
Friends of Pleasant Hill Creeks
Friends of San Ramon Creek
Greenbelt Alliance
Mount Diablo Audubon
Mount Diablo Interpretive Association
Muir Heritage Land Trust
Save Mount Diablo
Sustainable Contra Costa
Sustainable Walnut Creek
Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

Business and Industry Supporters:

Tesoro Refining & Marketing Company, LLC

This map illustrates the San Ramon Watershed, which is divided into several sub-watersheds: Clayton Valley Drain, Grayson Creek Watershed, Pine Creek Watershed, Las Trampas Creek Watershed, and San Ramon Creek Watershed. The map shows a network of roads, including major highways like I-580 and SR-24, and local roads such as Marina Vista Road and Bailey Road. Topographic features like Briones Hills and Mount Diablo are also indicated. A scale bar and a north arrow are provided in the top right corner.

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Executive Summary

Bob Simmons, Chair

In furthering our efforts towards a healthier watershed, we hosted 'Caring for the Creek' in Pleasant Hill in March 2015. This successful event was attended by over 100 people and included presentations by each of the creek groups on their work. A slide show by photographer Stephen Joseph was a highlight and generated a lot of excitement.

We are very pleased that the Town of Danville joined the Watershed Council this year. Now all nine cities and towns and the County are supporting the Watershed Council. We used this support in applications for two grants and issued a letter of support for a third grant application by a non-profit. We are interested in providing letters of support for grant requests by any group seeking funds to improve our watershed.



Of the work done by the supporting agencies, perhaps most important is the formative work by the Contra Costa Flood Control and Watershed District with regard to lower Walnut Creek. This effort will lead to significant improvements in the health of that part of the watershed.

The City of Lafayette allocated significant funding to support the preparation of a creek master plan for its downtown area, and is nearing completion on that effort. We meet as a full council on the first Thursday of the even-numbered months.

The meetings usually include a public speaker and the different stakeholders have the opportunity to learn from each other about the activities in our watershed, and about the things that can be done to improve the health of our watershed. At our meeting in February, we will have a presentation on the status of the Lafayette Creek Plan.

The challenges for 2016 include getting final approval for the mitigation project for Galindo Creek, seeking support for a Regional Advanced Mitigation Plan, and working with the communities to help focus efforts on creek restoration.

The Council is planning an early fall, community event that will be tied to a work session to help salmon habitat in November. We look forward to another year of positive, progress in our watershed.

We hope to see you in 2016!



WALNUT CREEK
WATERSHED
COUNCIL

Description of the Watershed

The Walnut Creek Watershed is the largest watershed in Contra Costa County totaling 146 square miles or 96,000 acres, in size. Its 340,000 inhabitants account for over 35% of the County's population. The watershed extends from San Ramon on the south and Martinez on the north to Moraga and Orinda on the west and Concord to the east. From protected natural lands (Mt. Diablo State Park, East Bay Regional Park District lands, and Walnut Creek Open Space) and grazed lands to suburbs and urban creeks, our watershed has a bit of almost everything.

The Walnut Creek watershed has 309 miles of creek channels - accounting for almost a quarter of all mapped creek channels in Contra Costa County. Over 70% of the channels (by length) in the watershed are natural, meaning they have no flood control or flow restriction devices. Almost 16% of the creeks are in concrete channels. Another 12% are constructed earth channels. Less than 1% of the channels are riprapped. All of this watershed information is from the *Walnut Creek Watershed Inventory* (Feb 2013).

Mission of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council

Our mission is to support community efforts, scientific studies, public education, and restoration projects which protect and enhance beneficial uses and resources in the entire watershed. The Council encourages sharing of information and promotes collaboration among the stakeholders.

History of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council

In 2011, several individuals representing different organizations began meeting to discuss how to create a community-based group with an interest in improving our watershed. After several months, they decided to create a watershed council and started the organization process. The result is the Walnut Creek Watershed Council (Council), which is a voluntary, non-regulatory stakeholder group that supports a healthy and sustainable watershed. As of the end of 2014, Contra Costa County and eight of the nine cities and towns in the watershed, together with several non-profit organizations and other governmental organizations, have expressed their support. The complete list can be seen in the beginning of this report.

Goals of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council

Our overall, long-term goals as a council are to both educate people & get them excited about the watershed. We also work to support creek groups and foster their project goals through information and direct actions. Our main goals for 2016 are to develop a long-term fiscal plan that includes funding sources and to create a Vision Plan Working Group that will report to the council.

Caring for Our Creeks: A Gathering

A Cooperative Effort



Since 2012, the Walnut Creek Watershed Council (WCWC), the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD), and Contra Costa County Flood Control and Conservation District (CCCFCD) have been partnering and bringing together communities from San Ramon to Concord to develop a common vision for healthy creeks. Together, we have fostered a council that provides support to local creek groups, including Friends of the Creeks, Friends of San Ramon Creek, the City of Lafayette Creeks Committee, and Friends of Pleasant Hill Creeks. Through outreach, the WCWC and its partners have created a group of citizens, agencies, and businesses whose primary concern is the health and well-being of the Walnut Creek Watershed, the largest watershed in Contra Costa County with over 309 creeks and tributaries.



The WCWC is a voluntary, non-regulatory stakeholder group that supports a healthy and sustainable watershed. Their mission is to support community efforts, scientific studies, public education, and restoration projects which protect and enhance beneficial uses and resources in the entire watershed. The Council encourages sharing of information and promotes collaboration among the stakeholders. With the CCRCD's support and funding from CCCFCD, we co-hosted an event titled "Caring for Our Creeks: A Gathering". The event was a huge success with lots of great information and activities. Local creeks groups had a chance to showcase their achievements in a panel presentation highlighting the year's activities and events in the watershed.



Creek Groups Display Their Achievements
Left: Mary Grim, Friends of the Creeks
Right: Beverly Lane, Friends of San Ramon Creek



CCCFCD presented their professionally-designed restoration plans for Lower Walnut Creek. Also, distinguished landscape photographer, Stephen Joseph, gave a stunning presentation of his beautiful new photos of the Walnut Creek Watershed from the summit of Mount Diablo to the mouth of Walnut Creek at Suisun Bay. The program began with a virtual tour of Walnut Creek Watershed presented by Rich Walkling of Restoration Design Group. The event was both informative and visually dazzling.

These collaborative efforts between agencies and public groups are the back bone of a healthy watershed. The need for an agency to assist in bringing together such a large group of stakeholders and volunteers was met by the CCRCD this year by assisting the Council to provide a place for interested parties to make a difference in their watershed.

2015 Quadrennial Contra Costa Watershed Symposium Honors Members of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council



Gathered together to Learn, Inspire, Network & Celebrate, more than 300 people all committed to caring for the County's watershed participated on December 3rd in the Fifth Quadrennial Contra Costa Watershed Symposium. The event, held at the Pleasant Hill Community Center, included an awards program that spotlighted the work of leaders, champions and projects that were each making a significant contribution to the wellbeing of the watershed. The 2015 Symposium honored several of the Council's members for their hard work and dedication to the health of our creeks and its native inhabitants.

The symposium is held every four years to draw together local groups, community members and representatives from the public and private sectors that are interested in creek and watershed health. Information sharing, networking and problem-solving opportunities are integrated into the symposiums. Ongoing work related to these topics is conducted by the Contra Costa Watershed Forum, which was borne out of the first symposium. The Watershed Forum is an open committee of around 50 organizations that work together with the County to make our water resources healthy, functional, attractive and safe.

Award Winners

2015 Watershed Champion

Bob Simmons

Watershed Leadership Award

Ron Brown, Jim Hale, Lesley Hunt, and Igor Skaredoff

Watershed Project Award

Wildcat Creek Daylighting Project

Watersheds in Education Award

OWL Program, Paul Lindeman, Kate Perry, and Nick Marple

Special Recognition Award

Abby Fateman and John Kopchik



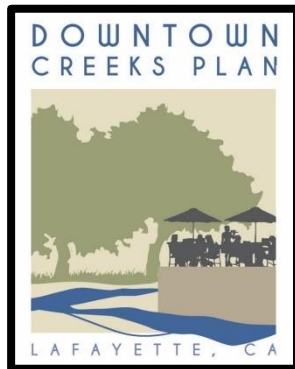
*Symposium Guests Enjoy the Lovely
View from the Pleasant Hill
Community Center after a Delicious
BBQ Lunch on the Day of the Event*



*WCWC Award Winner: L to R
Igor Skaredoff, Lesley Hunt, Jim
Hale, Ron Brown and Presenter, Mike
Carlson CCCFCD*



City of Lafayette Creeks Committee 2015 Report



The Lafayette Downtown Creeks Plan A Community Coming Together to Plan the Future of Its Creeks

The Lafayette Creeks Committee encourages beautification of Lafayette's more than 16-miles of creeks and improves residents' awareness of creek maintenance and pollution prevention policies. The committee helps the City's staff ensure compliance with public education requirements under its Storm Water Permit.

Activities 2015

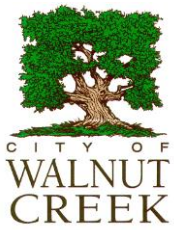
- Contributed and Assisted in Lafayette Downtown Design Guidelines Regarding Visions, Goals and Guidelines for Development along Creeks in the Lafayette Downtown Specific Plan Area
- Held Public Meetings for the Downtown Specific Plan to Assess the Communities Wants and Concerns
- Held Meetings for Downtown Creeks Plan to Gain Community Involvement
- Presented Plan at Public Meetings and Helped to Gain Community Support
- Held Lafayette Community Creek Day: Led Guided Hikes and Activities for Children

Creeks Plan Timeline



Please Visit our Website at:

www.ci.lafayette.ca.us/city-hall/city-departments/public-works/creeks/creeks-committee



The City of Walnut Creek & Friends of the Creeks Pollinator Garden Renovation 2015 Report



*Volunteers Planting Seeds in the Walnut Creek Pollinator
Garden in Civic Park*

Since 2014, a weekly volunteer group has maintained the Creek Walk, Oak Demonstration Garden, and the new Pollinator Garden. In the spring of 2015, three interpretive signs and a bench were installed by city staff, and volunteers put in the first phase of plantings. Despite the lack of water in the spring, 98% of the plants made it through the first summer. Weekly volunteers (including members of the Church of Latter Day Saints, and students from Springstone School in Lafayette) weeded, pruned, and propagated new plants. The group added mulch to the garden beds, and cleared out invasive grasses from the eastern side of the site near the Iron Horse trail.

The students also created plant cards for Watershed Watchers, a program for 4th and 5th graders sponsored by the City of Walnut Creek's Clean Water Program. The cards will be used to educate the students about native plants in the area. In the fall we added more plants and students started annual native wildflowers that will be planted in early 2016. Volunteers continue to be the heart of this project. Since the project's inception in 2014, they have logged 2,641.5 hours for the Creek Walk area. Volunteers meet weekly on Wednesday from 9 am-1pm and for special projects when a large group is needed.

Funding for this project is made possible by a grant from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the City of Walnut Creek Clean Water Program, the City of Walnut Creek Parks Department and Friends of the Creeks. In 2016, phase 2 of the plantings will be installed. To find out more about the project or opportunities to volunteer contact Patrice Hanlon, Volunteer Coordinator at phpatrice@gmail.com

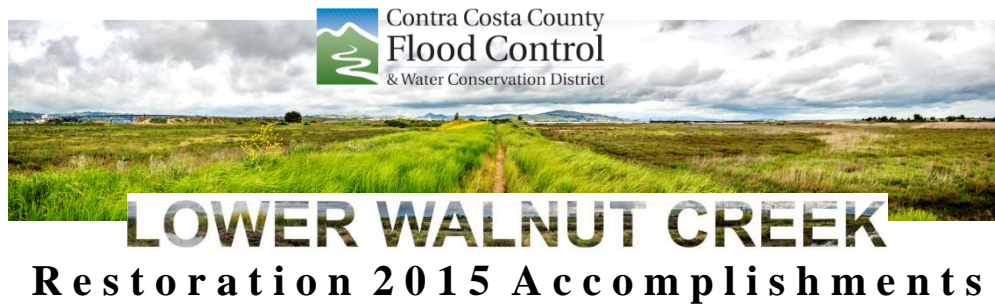


Flood Control & Water Conservation District

In 2015 the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District continued its efforts to better serve the residents of Contra Costa County by increasing outreach efforts, and making improvements to our facilities; insuring that we are prepared for the coming storms associated with an El Nino year. Here are a few highlights from 2015:

- The District was a majority sponsor of the 5th Quadrennial Contra Costa Watershed Symposium held on December 3rd, 2015 at the Pleasant Hill Community Center. Over 300 attendees gathered to Learn, Inspire, Network, and Celebrate the various accomplishments made in Contra Costa County's watersheds.
- One of the most important tasks the District embarked on this year was community polling. In order to assess public awareness of the District and the services provided, the District conducted community polling. This survey will serve as a benchmark for future public assessment and measurement of customer service performance.
- In early 2015, the District started an interactive webpage for anyone in the general public to view real time rain and stream level data. The site works on both desktop and most mobile devices. The District has presented their "7-5-3-2, Flood!" flood forecasting tool to the public, and is developing a video to explain how the formula works.
- To make sure the public is prepared for any flooding associated with El Nino the District launched a new online "Ready for Rain" campaign. The webpage provides useful information that the public may need in case a flood occurs.
- The Creek and Channel Safety awareness program conducted a pilot program at Walnut Creek Intermediate School to develop a curriculum of awareness of the Stay Out, Stay Alive! Campaign. The students participated in a poster contest, and lunchtime trivia, which were developed by students in the leadership class with some assistance from District staff.
- The 3rd annual Giving the Natives a Chance was held on December 12th. Giving the Natives a Chance brings members of the community together to return native plants to flood control channels. The project has expanded upstream, and now includes more of the watershed.
- The District conducted a pilot assessment project on three different facilities in the Walnut Creek watershed. Due to its success, the District started a multi-year project and the goal is to complete assessment of all facilities within five years.





The County Flood Control District has been working for many years on ways to make Lower Walnut Creek more sustainable. Now that the Army Corps of Engineers has relinquished control over the most downstream four miles of the creek to the Flood Control District, local community-based restoration planning begun in earnest in 2015, and is now gaining traction and widespread interest.

Walnut Creek is the largest watershed in Contra Costa County. It drains over 150 square miles, from San Ramon northward, until it reaches the Suisun Bay. Lower Walnut Creek consists of the most downstream four miles of Walnut Creek, an area bounded by the City of Martinez on the east, and the Tesoro Oil Refinery on the west, and contains Walnut Creek's outlet to Suisun Bay.

In 2015, the District with their technical consultant, Environmental Science Associates, has mapped biological features and wetlands in the project area and identified the presence of a number of special status species. The District's team has also completed baseline hydrology and geomorphic modelling and released a comprehensive existing conditions report.

We also kicked off of the District's community-based planning effort, which included targeted outreach to dozens of local stakeholders, including the Walnut Creek Watershed Council. The District, along with these stakeholders, formed a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), which continues to give feedback on the habitat, flood risk, restoration, and recreation opportunities. The District continues to engage the SAG and the general public as the planning process moves forward.

The District also began a popular series of site tours for stakeholders and the public, and District staff spoke about the restoration project at many events, both locally and statewide, including the Quadrennial Creek Symposium in Pleasant Hill and the Floodplain Management Conference in Palm Springs. To close out 2015, in December the District hosted the first of a series of well-attended community workshops to further gather feedback about possible restoration alternatives.

We also partnered with the San Francisco Estuary Institute to prepare a Historical Ecology report to uncover how the area looked in the early 19th century. Draft maps and results were presented at the Quadrennial Watershed Symposium in December, and published maps will be released later in 2016. Looking forward to 2016, the District will continue public engagement and technical studies with the goal of selecting a preferred, feasible restoration plan for Lower Walnut Creek.

To learn more or to sign up for a tour, check out the project website at
<http://www.lowerwalnutcreek.org>.

Friends of the Creeks 2015 Report



FRIENDS
OF THE
CREEKS

26th Annual Downtown Creek Cleanup. About 160 people participated this year in removing trash from 2.5 miles of creek channel. The City of Walnut Creek's plastic bag ordinance had been in effect for about six months at that time, and we were pleased to see that we had about a 50% reduction in the type of trash it affected.

Pine Creek Cleanups: Again this year we partnered with Flood Control to lead groups that cleaned two separate stretches of Pine Creek in eastern Walnut Creek on Community Service Day.

Northern California Black Walnut Partnership: As a result of an urgent phone call requesting assistance in raising \$10,000, we became involved in a unique effort to keep one of our native trees from slipping into oblivion. In the 19th century, English walnuts were grafted onto native walnut rootstock.



Community Service Day volunteers clean up Pine Creek, which is always dry in the summer



Volunteers remove the second flush of weeds from our restoration site in Civic Park East

Wind pollination contaminated most of the remaining natural native trees. The \$10,000 we raised paid for genetic testing, the only way to tell pure natives from hybrids. More than half of the 66 samples came from our watershed. Several WCWC members contributed funds, and so did many individuals and members of creek groups and restoration groups from around the county and the East Bay hills. We are still awaiting the test results, but we are hopeful that pure natives will soon be found.

Habitat Restoration: We embarked on a long-term project to restore the creek channel below the Creek walk in Civic Park. We also removed Arundo from a downtown property during the Week of Caring.

For more information about Friends of the Creeks, Please Visit Our Website at www.friendsofthecreeks.org

Salmon: After a three-year hiatus, we counted salmon on the main stem of Walnut Creek and found the population was comparable to prior years.



We had this 35" beauty measured and back in the water within 30 seconds.



Friends of Pleasant Hill Creeks 2015 Report



Earth Day, Grayson Creek Clean Up: About 20 volunteers filled two-four yard dumpsters with trash pulled out of Grayson Creek between Second Street and Chilpancingo.

Pleasant Hill Community Service Day, Ellinwood Creek clean up: About 2.25 tons of trash were collected by about 40-50 individuals. The volunteers included students from Valley View Middle School, youths from the Church of Latter Day Saints, Rotary Club Members, Friends of Pleasant Hill Creeks, and other community members who all pitched in to make a difference in the Walnut Creek Watershed!



We look forward to more activities and cleanups in Pleasant Hill in 2016!

For more information about
Friends of Pleasant Hill
Creeks, please contact:
Heidi Petty at
WCWCreekGroups@ccrcd.org



Friends of San Ramon Creek 2015 Report



The Friends of San Ramon Creek support programs and projects which promote a healthy San Ramon Creek and the 54-square mile San Ramon Creek watershed.

The Friends of San Ramon Creek worked collaboratively in a variety of ways this year in an effort to fulfill our goals. Heidi Petty from the RCD supported us as staff. We participate in activities of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council on a regular basis, including help with the Caring for Our Creeks meeting on March 19, 2015.

- **Programs:** In cooperation with the Danville Library, we advertised and helped present several meetings on wildlife. We helped sponsor a meeting on preparing for El Nino rains with the Town of Danville and County Flood Control.
- **Earth Day:** Working with several Danville groups and individuals, we had a table at Earth Day on April 19 next to San Ramon Creek. We welcomed the East Bay Regional park District's mobile visitor center and staff to the event. Naturalist James Wilson talked about native plants and animals and focused on the creek and storm drains.
- **Advocacy:** The FSRC helped encourage the Town of Danville to join the Walnut Creek Watershed Council, meaning all cities in the watershed are now members.
- **Creek Work:** Arundo was removed by Dick Heron, David Bowen and others. Unfortunately, new stands were discovered along Sycamore Creek. Creek stewards were encouraged to address their parts of the creek.
- **Mitigation:** Discussions with one developer occurred which would bring improvements to the creek.
- **School Partnerships:** A creek adoption and clean-up program is currently being explored with students and teachers at SRV High School.

Dick Heron & Beverly Lane 2015



*Naturalist James Wilson Teaching People
about the San Ramon Creek*

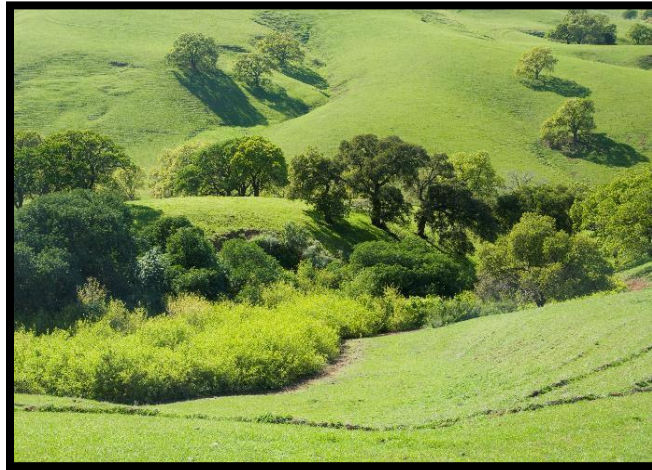


*Volunteer/Property Owner Dave Bowen
addressing Arundo near the Creek*

Please Visit our Website to Learn More about Friends of San Ramon Creek
www.ccrd.org/FOSRC.html



Save Mount Diablo 2015 Report



Mangini and Poppies-March 22nd, 2008
(Photo by: Scott Hein)

Our Achievements in 2015:

- Stewards of the 208 acre Mangini Ranch property near the headwaters of Galindo Creek.
- Maintained 3 miles of trail on Mangini Ranch.
- Partnered with a local rancher to use cattle as a means to manage endangered species habitat.
- Controlled noxious weeds - Artichoke thistle and *Dittrichia graveolens* on our Mangini Ranch property near the headwaters of Galindo Creek.
- Hosted 3 major recreational events (cycling & running) that had a total of 2,000 attendees in parks within the Walnut Creek Watershed.
- Led 6 public hikes in the watershed, with a total of 100 attendees.
- Monitored eleven agency agendas each month for projects that could have impacts to cultural, natural and scenic resources in the Watershed

Please visit Save Mt. Diablo's website at www.savemountdiablo.org

Town of Danville | 2015 Watershed Activity Report

FOR THE WALNUT CREEK WATERSHED COUNCIL



PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT, PRESERVING OUR HISTORY AND RETAINING
DANVILLE'S SPECIAL CHARACTER



1



1,163 DRAIN INLETS CLEANED

The Town's Maintenance Services Department cleaned 1,163 drain inlets in 2014/15, working to keep garbage and litter from entering the watershed.

2



OVER 1,200 CURB MARKERS REPLACED

The Town of Danville marks all storm drains with curb markers that read "No Dumping, Drains to Creek". This program began in 1993 by volunteers. With the first markers placed over 22 years ago, the Town recognized the need to start a replacement program, replacing over 500 markers per year. This year, over 1,200 curb markers were replaced.

3



NO PESTICIDES

The Town is committed to not using pesticides in creeks. All Town creek maintenance was completed through hand weeding.

4



PLASTIC BAG BAN

The Town of Danville recently adopted a ban on single-use carryout plastic bag, which takes effect on July 1, 2016. This ban is aimed at reducing litter in creeks.

5



EDUCATION & PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Town reaches a variety of groups and residents through public education. The Town funds the "Kids for the Bay" environmental education program. The 2015 Earth Day event on April 19 featured over 30 booths and activities. In Fall 2015, the Town partnered with Friends of San Ramon Creek and the County Flood Control District on an education event.

6



NATURAL POND MAINTENANCE

For over 20 years, the Town has maintained a natural pond at Oak Hill Park through natural algae control, resulting in clean water quality and enhanced microbial activity.

For more information, contact Nat Rojanasathira, Town Manager's Office, at 925-314-3328



Contra Costa Resource Conservation District 2015 Report

In our second year as partners, the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District (CCRCD) and the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District have worked together to provide staff support to the Council, expand public outreach for creek stewardship and educational activities, and assisted with new initiatives within the watershed. One of our biggest achievements this year was our Caring for Our Creeks event which brought together creek groups, agencies, and community volunteers to celebrate the achievements and activities in the Walnut Creek Watershed. We at the RCD look forward to continuing our strong partnership in 2016!

Lisa Anich is the coordinator of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council. She has worked hard this year to help build Council participation through outreach and event organization, and by continuing to provide support to the Council and its members. She works hard to ensure that the flow of information and services are up to date and available to the both the community and agencies.



Heidi Petty is serving as the coordinator for the Walnut Creek Watershed Creek Groups. She has helped to bring creek groups and organizations together this year to build a stronger Council Encouraging them to interacting with one another and bringing them into the wider group of citizens working toward a better watershed as a whole. She has worked closely with each group to help build capacity and assist with events, both providing support and resources.

Ben Wallace, Executive Director, is currently a member of the Walnut Creek Watershed Council's Executive Committee. He is committed to the continued progress of the council and its role in facilitating collaboration between agencies, organizations, and individuals working toward a healthier, more natural watershed.



The Contra Costa Resource Conservation District prepared this Achievements Report with information provided by the individual groups and with printing services provided by the Flood Control District.

For Further Information on our Programs and Services, please see our website at
www.CCRCD.org



Design Layout of this report by: Heidi Petty, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District
Funding for printing this report was provided by: CCC Flood Control and Water Conservation District